News release

Services unite on World Met. Day

18 March 2005

The Met Office is helping schoolchildren in Devon and Uganda share climate and weather information via the internet, as part of World Met. Day on 23 March.

As the annual celebration of the formation of the World Meteorological Organization, World Met. Day unites national meteorological services around the globe to highlight their work and raise awareness about environmental issues.

This year's theme is 'Weather, climate, water and sustainable development'. The growing global population, poverty, access to fresh water, and food production are inextricably linked to climate change and to weather and climate-related natural disasters. By 2020, it is predicted that 75 per cent of the world's population could be affected by flood and drought, and the number of climate-related disasters could be as high as 245 a year.

In Uganda, the threat of a weather-related disaster is always imminent and many of the schoolchildren taking part in the sharing of weather information are already living in the shadow of drought.

Barbara Harvey from the Link Development Community - which helped organise the project in Uganda - said: "The parents of most of the children who took part in this project are peasant farmers who are totally reliant on regular and predictable weather patterns, and this has not been the case in the last couple of years. They are aware of climate change because it has a direct impact on their lives - whether their crops will grow and thus whether they will eat or not - so weather is really important to the children."

The children have been encouraged to investigate ways of harnessing the weather to provide energy, including making solar panels, ovens and wind turbines.

Uganda schools experiments report

Rod Crook, from Tipton St John Primary School in Devon, said: "Sharing this information with children in Africa has made our pupils very aware of the power of weather. Our solar oven reached temperatures of 27 °C, which the children considered hot until they heard that the ones in Uganda got up to 74 °C."

Gill Ryall, head of the team at the Met Office that oversees international activities, said: "We hope that getting these children involved in weather early will foster a lifelong interest in the natural environment."

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